

Finally, with regards to optional deeds, we see people going to two extremes. Firstly, we have those who when hearing of incidents such as those quoted above about the dog and the branch, become complacent. They think that they have done many such optional deeds and helped many people, so they will most definitely go to Jannah! This is definitely not the correct mindset. Rather, the correct way to look at such incidents is to think that the person in the incident was fortunate. Take the example of a person who escapes a fine from the police for doing something wrong, this does not mean that another should also do the same because he too will escape in the same way! We should therefore continue performing as many deeds as possible. The other extreme people go to is thinking that they are so steeped in sin that a small optional deed will do no good for them whatsoever. This is also incorrect, for no matter how sinful a person may be, every good deed, even if it is the mere saying of *subhānallāh* or *alḥamdulillāh*, will definitely be beneficial in one way or another.

It is therefore important that we do the utmost to maximise our good deeds with the intention of seeking the attention of Allāh ﷻ. If we do, then, inshā'allāh, Allāh ﷻ will grant barakah in our actions and we will soon find ourselves practicing the whole Dīn, performing both the obligatory and optional acts. May Allāh ﷻ grant us the tawfīq.

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Importance of Small Deeds





The aim and objective of every believer is to acquire the Pleasure of Allāh ﷻ, and for that one has to carry out good deeds. These good deeds fall into two categories: *farḍ* (obligatory) and *nafl* (optional). Non-compliance with the obligatory deeds will leave a believer sinful; therefore, priority has to be given to the obligatory commands. But, together with this, an ardent effort needs to be made to perform as many optional deeds as possible.

The Prophet ﷺ says in a ḥadīth qudsīyy that Allāh ﷻ says:

“My servant does not get proximity to Me with anything more beloved to Me than what I have made compulsory upon him. Thereafter, he continues to gain proximity to Me by performing optional deeds, until I love him.” (Al-Bukhārī)

From this ḥadīth we understand that in order to acquire maximum proximity to Allāh ﷻ and become His beloved, together with carrying out the obligatory actions, we need to go beyond and perform the optional deeds; then only will we become the beloved of Allāh ﷻ. It is therefore of utmost importance that we take the whole package and, whilst carrying out the obligatory deeds, try our utmost to carry out as many optional deeds as possible.

One should, upon seeing his/her weakness in performing obligatory actions, never feel that there is no benefit in performing optional actions. This is an incorrect mindset, as deficiencies in, or lack of obligatory deeds on the Day of Qiyāmah can somewhat be made up through optional devotions. The Prophet ﷺ said:

“Indeed, the first action that will be judged by Allāh on the Day of Judgement shall be ṣalāh. Our Lord, the Great, the Mighty, despite knowing, will say to the angels, ‘Check my servant’s account (for his ṣalāh); did he complete it or leave it incomplete?’ If it is complete, then it will be written as such. And if it is found lacking, then Allāh will say, ‘Check if my servant has any optional ṣalāh in his account. If he has optional ṣalāh, then complete his obligatory ṣalāh with this and then reckon him on this deed.’” (Abū Dāwūd)

Similarly, another benefit of performing optional actions, whilst being weak in obligatory actions, is that the nūr (light) created in the heart by these actions will make the heart healthy making obligatory actions easy to perform. Therefore, any small action should not be undermined or underestimated, as one is not aware of the spiritual effect it will have on the heart.

Moreover, many times optional actions which seemed trivial at the time become the means of Allāh ﷻ’s forgiveness. We have the famous story of the transgressing woman who upon seeing a thirsty dog gave it water to drink. On account of this one deed Allāh ﷻ forgave her and entered her into Jannah. (Al-Bukhārī) Similar is the story of the man who cut a branch from a tree which was hindering people who used that path. The Prophet ﷺ mentioned that he had seen the man strolling in Jannah on account of this deed. (Muslim)

Another important point to keep in mind regarding this is that any action, big or small, should be carried out as soon as the thought of performing it comes to mind. These thoughts to do good are like noble guests. If they are not entertained, they will not return.